

Beverly LaHaye  
Chairman



SENATE JUDICIARY
EXHIBIT NO. 64
DATE 2/9/11
SEN. SB 116

# Concerned Women for America of Montana

Cover Page

Senate Bill 116

Please give to all Senate Judiciary  
Committee Members

CONCERNED WOMEN FOR AMERICA  
OF MONTANA

Beverly LaHaye  
Chairman



Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Patti Kanduch, and I am the State Director for Concerned Women for America (CWA) of Montana. CWA is the largest public policy women's organization in the United States with more than 500,000 members. We are here today to strongly support S.B. 116

As proponents of assisted suicide become more vocal, the people of Montana need to make it known that we do not accept assisted suicide as an answer to, terminal illness, depression, aging, pain, loneliness, disability, or any other problem.

The proper approach to death and dying is to increase our levels of pain management, and care and compassion, not permit doctors to coolly write lethal prescriptions. Do we think we are so sophisticated that we can legalize death without any consequences? In our real world of Montana today, legalizing assisted suicide would be dangerous and reckless. With our dysfunctional health care system, high rates of elder abuse, already alarmingly significant suicide levels, pronounced economic uncertainties, and divisions of race, gender, religion, legalizing assisted suicide would be bad medicine and even worse public policy.

Guidelines for assisted suicide will not protect against abuse. This is clearly seen in our country and around the world. Oregon residents Barbara Wagner and Randy Stroup were both on Medicaid, the state's health insurance for the poor. They both had cancer and wanted very much to live, both were denied treatment. The state of Oregon did offer to pay for their assisted suicide. When physician assisted suicide laws pass, health care diminishes greatly in favor of euthanizing, especially for the poor. The people of Oregon now live in fear of their assisted suicide law. The fact that people in Oregon are carrying around a card that says, "Do not euthanize me," shows they feel scared and pressured.

In the Netherlands where assisted suicide is legal, children are killed because of birth defects, and doctors justify the practice. According to "The Lancet" doctors killed approximately 8 percent of all infants who died in the Netherlands in 1995. Dutch doctors routinely euthanize patients who have not asked to die. Repeated studies demonstrate that each year at least 900-1000 Dutch patients are non-voluntarily euthanized by their doctors. In Belgium another study has been published concerning the practice of pressuring people to die in order to provide healthy organs.

Disability rights activists are the most committed and effective opponents of legalizing assisted suicide. Diane Coleman, one of the nation's most prominent disability rights activists and founder of "Not Dead Yet," fears that legalizing assisted suicide, even if formally restricted to

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the terminally ill, would one day validate discriminatory public attitudes that are profoundly threatening to people with disabilities.

Assisted suicide will also be a threat to our teenagers. About 19 percent of our teens tell researchers they have experienced depression. By passing assisted suicide laws, we are telling our teenagers that suicide is okay and necessary sometimes. No one stays depressed forever, but if you take the "suicide pill", you will be dead forever.

How do the physicians, nurses and hospice care givers feel about physician assisted suicide? "The American Medical Association" opposes it. "The American Nurses Association" opposes it, and the hospice workers oppose it. I think their feelings need to be taken into account. They will be the ones doing the killing. Do we really want our doctors turned into Dr. Kevorkians?

For all of these reasons, we know if assisted suicide becomes law in Montana, we will be on a slippery slope that is very real. Once we accept killing of terminally ill patients, we will - overtime- come to accept the killing of chronically ill patients, disabled people, depressed patients, and ultimately perhaps, even children.

When a patient says, "Help me, doctor," he is assuming that his doctor is on the side of life. Let us keep it that way.

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